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## ARTICLE

# *Avant la Lettre: Contradictory Affinities* in Antonio Flores, Juan Bautista Amorós (Silverio Lanza) and Ángel Ganivet

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Juan Bautista Amorós (Silverio Lanza) and Ángel Ganivet have both been labelled as precursors to the Generation of 1898 and to Spanish authors active in the early decades of the twentieth century. This article, by contrast, reads Amorós's and Ganivet's work beside that of Antonio Flores, a *costumbrista* author who died in 1865. The affinities of these mid- and late nineteenth-century writers suggest that there are alternatives to teleological literary histories that are constructed around a narrative of turn-of-the-century rupture; if Amorós and Ganivet are said to have much in common with early twentieth-century authors, and can be shown to share as much with Flores, then the narrative of radical rupture becomes less appealing. More importantly perhaps, probing the nature of these affinities opens up new vistas on the nineteenth-century literary landscape.

*Ayer, hoy y mañana* (1863–4) by Flores, *Historia de un pueblo* (1889–93) by Amorós, and *La conquista del reino de Maya* (1897) by Ganivet are radically different in subject matter, style and form, yet the three texts nevertheless share a set of key characteristics. First, they are all self-conscious or metafictional texts. Second, they deploy a range of apparently incompatible generic conventions. Third, they articulate problems associated with temporality, and more specifically with futurity. The insistent use of metafictional devices shatters the epistemological assumptions of progress and of traditionalist nostalgia alike. Linear understandings of time are similarly interrogated with consequences for concepts such as the spirit of the age, progress, civilization or empire. The futures these texts envision are best avoided, while their pasts are better left behind, leaving their destinations uncertain.

Reading Flores, Amorós and Ganivet with an eye to the self-conscious text, generic miscellany and future time, reveals a body of nineteenth-century Spanish literature that feasts on contradiction and paradox, and that understands knowledge to be contingent, temporality to be directionless, and both to be radically unstable.

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Juan Bautista Amorós (Silverio Lanza) and Ángel Ganivet have both been labelled as precursors to the Generation of 1898 and to Spanish authors active in the early decades of the twentieth century (Shaw; García Reyes; Ardilla). Going back, rather than forward in time, this article instead reads Amorós's and Ganivet's work beside that of their predecessor Antonio Flores, a *costumbrista* author who died in 1865, three years before the 1868 Revolution and the *sexenio revolucionario*. The affinities of these mid- and late nineteenth-century writers invite an interrogation of literary histories that are constructed around a narrative of turn-of-the-century rupture; if Amorós and Ganivet are said to have much in common with early twentieth-century authors, and can be shown to share as much with Flores, then the narrative of radical rupture becomes harder to sustain. More importantly, probing the nature of these affinities opens up new vistas in the nineteenth-century literary landscape.

The specific texts explored in the following pages are *Ayer, hoy y mañana* (1863–4) by Flores,<sup>1</sup> *Historia de un pueblo* (1889–93) by Amorós,<sup>2</sup> and *La conquista del reino de Maya* (1897) by Ganivet.<sup>3</sup> Though radically different in subject matter, style and form, they share three key characteristics. First, they are all metafictional texts. Second, they deploy a range of apparently incompatible or logically inconsistent generic conventions. Third, they use some form of future time as a setting. I will explore how these characteristics combine and interact in ways that create obstacles for modes of thinking which are dependent on linear time, including forms of traditionalist nostalgia and belief in progress, ideas about the spirit of the age, claims about the meaning of civilization or justifications for imperialist interventions.

The fact that these are self-conscious texts, which repeatedly draw our attention to their inadequacies and inconsistencies, does not lead inevitably to the conclusion that they are ahead of their time. They do not anticipate twentieth-century metafictional texts so much as suggest that, in some Spanish literature at least, self-reflexivity may not be such a useful tool for distinguishing between nineteenth- and twentieth-century literatures. A tendency to equate literary worth with metafiction and self-reflexivity has been noticeable in criticism on nineteenth-century Spanish literature (Santiáñez-Tió 1995, 1994, 1994a, 1993). However, the terms of debate have changed in recent decades; there is a more confident and widespread acknowledgement that Spanish authors of the time were experimental and innovative in ways that do not reproduce patterns developed in other contexts, and also that they should not be judged by the criteria of their successors (Ginger 2012, 2005, 2000). Thus, such self-conscious texts should not automatically be understood (or dismissed) as precursory, but instead considered in relation to a broader swathe of literary practices within nineteenth-century Spain. When this is done, some of the more sweeping literary historical claims that metafiction is somehow symptomatic of a peculiarly twentieth-century postmodern crisis begin to look a little shaky. Such trajectories could perhaps withstand a few exceptions – *Don Quijote*, *Tristram Shandy*, *El caballero de las botas azules* are some of the obvious names but there are many, many more, and with every addition to the list the case is weakened.

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from and references to this work are to the 1863–4 edition, by volume and page number. *Ayer* makes up volumes 1 and 2, *Hoy* volumes 3, 4, and 5, and *Mañana* volumes 6 and 7. This edition is available to view online from *The Internet Archive* <<https://archive.org/details/ayerhoyymana01flor>>. In quotations from all sources, the original spelling and accentuation is maintained.

<sup>2</sup> References to *Historia de un pueblo* in this article will normally be to Juan Manuel de Prada's edition of Amorós's novels, with volume and page number provided in parentheses. Occasionally, alternative editions will be indicated, for example if typography and page layout play a role or if paratext has been omitted from Prada's edition.

<sup>3</sup> This edition is available from *The Internet Archive* <<https://archive.org/stream/laconquistadelre00gani#page/n5/mode/2up>>.

A focus on eclectic and playful approaches to genre requires some contextualization. Recent scholarship on mid-nineteenth-century Spanish literature hints that generic conventions were deployed in curiously contradictory ways. In several cases this either went unremarked by previous criticism, or the works were interpreted as straight imitations of the texts they may in fact have set out to parody. Noël Valis, commenting on Ayguals de Izco's *María, la hija de un jornalero* (1845–6), and on the mid-century Spanish novel more broadly, argues:

Many kinds of novels were being written in the first half of the nineteenth century: the epistolary novel persisted, the historical novel was in vogue, and novels of social customs as well as a steady flow of translations catered to a small but growing, largely middle-class readership. As in the eighteenth century, there is also a marked tendency toward the hybrid, in which the term 'novel' is a floating, unstable category. For example, *María* contains elements of, among other things, melodrama, the sentimental novel, the anticlerical novel, and the modern guidebook. (Valis 96)

For Leigh Mercer, critics of Rosalía de Castro's novel *La hija del mar* (1859), who dismissed it on the grounds that it indulges in sentimentality, melodramatic language and plot and bears some similarity to the *folletín*, may have missed the point: 'The accusations of fragmentation, digression, and juvenile writing often leveled at *La hija del mar* are in fact the result of utilization of Gothic tropes to create a truly post-Romantic and proto-feminist Spanish novel' (Mercer 35). Although, unlike Mercer, Andrew Ginger does not use the label 'post-Romantic', he nevertheless makes an analogous point. Romanticism, he posits, has been identified with naive assertions about the historical subject, while post-romanticism is understood to include an interrogation of assumptions underlying these assertions. In this account, post-romanticism exposes the false consciousness of its predecessor. Ginger jettisons this framework. Neither Flores nor his Spanish contemporaries, he contends, were victims of false consciousness. Instead, they were fully cognizant of the contradictions inherent in their genres of choice. Thus, Flores's *Doce españoles de brocha gorda* (1846) combines the conventions of the literature of types with those of the *misterios*:

La tipología es inherente a cualquier intento de dibujar las formas sociales, sobre todo en un medio que sintetiza las cosas como lo hace el periodismo, pero amenaza siempre con falsear lo que dibuja, porque depende de la fiabilidad de su autor y es necesariamente una generalización de lo particular. El misterio en cambio, presta el dinamismo y particularidad necesarios para captar las transformaciones e interacciones sociales. Pero al intentar plasmar las formas sociales, también depende necesariamente de la tipología cuyas generalizaciones puede muy bien contradecir. (Ginger 274)

Ginger shows how juxtaposing two sets of generic conventions generates contradictory meanings. Rather than dismissing this as a sign of Flores's incompetence or as symptomatic of the poor quality of literature produced in Spain during the Isabelline period, Ginger celebrates this as a deliberate and successful strategy. Thus, Valis, Mercer and Ginger, in their different ways, all point to the deliberate manipulation of generic conventions. When this is combined with a clear strategy of drawing attention to the text *qua* text, as occurs in the three works discussed here, claims that the authors suffered from some form of false consciousness again fail to convince.

Claims that the nineteenth century was a time of optimism about the future and faith in the doctrine of progress are similarly dubious. Curiously, while there is relatively little scholarly work available on the representation of the future in nineteenth-century Spanish

literature, studies on the historical novel or historicity in the realist novel have been more common, particularly in relation to Galdós (e.g. Bly; Gilman; Ribbans; Urey). This trend can perhaps be explained by the conventional view of nineteenth-century Spain as backward and as backward-looking, though it could equally be argued that precisely because nineteenth-century Spain perceived itself as out of step with the rest of Europe, authors might have attempted to compensate by turning to the future as a focus for fiction. Whatever the reasons, the use of the future as a setting became increasingly common in Spain in this period, whether in the form of short pieces published in the periodical press, prose narratives both long and short, or serious or comic works for the stage. These texts show that their authors did not generally think about the future and the past in a way that forced them to choose between tradition and progress, or in ways that align them exclusively with reactionary or progressive political outlooks (Lawless 2015; see also Alkon). In a similar vein, Rødtjer's reading of José Fernández Bremón's science fiction demonstrates that mantras about clear dichotomies between science and religion have skewed our view of the nineteenth-century literary-historical landscape (Rødtjer). Just as with the debates surrounding science and religion, the representation of the future turns out to be a much messier affair.

Combining a future setting with metafictional devices should not be so surprising; voices from the future require some form of explanatory device or commentary. What is more striking about these three texts is the extremes to which generic miscellany and self-reflexivity are taken. Patricia Waugh has defined metafiction as 'a mode of writing within a broader cultural movement often referred to as post-modernism' (Waugh 21). The 'typical features' are ones whereby 'what is foregrounded is the writing of the text as the most fundamentally problematic aspect of the text' (22). Waugh usefully provides a list:

the over-obtrusive, visibly inventing narrator [...]; ostentatious typographic experiment [...]; explicit dramatization of the reader [...]; Chinese-box structures [...]; incantatory and absurd lists [...]; over-systematized or overtly arbitrarily arranged structural devices [...]; total breakdown of temporal and spatial organization of narrative [...]; infinite regress [...]; dehumanization of character, parodic doubles, obtrusive proper names [...]; self-reflexive images [...]; critical discussions of the story within the story [...]; continuous undermining of specific fictional conventions [...]; use of popular genres [...]; and explicit parody of previous texts whether literary or non-literary. (Waugh 22)

Over the following pages, it should become clear that although this list was drawn up with the aim of describing the phenomenon of postmodernism in a largely English-language context, most, if not all, of these devices feature prominently and repeatedly in the three nineteenth-century Spanish texts discussed here. This goes a long way towards explaining why two of these texts have been thought of as precursors, but thinking of them solely in terms of what they were precursors to does not always help us to understand what was going on in the nineteenth century.

Through the following readings of Flores, Amorós and Ganivet, I argue that this pervasive use of metafictional devices dismantles the epistemological assumptions of progress and of traditionalist nostalgia alike. It is not so much that this or that position is endorsed or attacked, considered or rejected, but that the degree of miscellany and unreliability sometimes makes it impossible to extract any sort of interpretation at all, except that of the non-sequitur writ large. Meanwhile, multiple generic conventions associated with different epistemological and ideological standpoints are played off against each other. Forms of binary thinking are thwarted and readers are forced to consider alternative ways of

construing the texts. And, in imaginary futuristic worlds dominated by the non-sequential, the illogical and the irrational, narratives of progress, civilization, empire and history itself soon find themselves taking unexpected detours. Thus, it sometimes seems as if it might be best to skirt around the future, rather than set one's sights on it as a desirable destination. Crucially, however, this does not mean that these texts construct the past as a refuge from modernity. This is not an either/or scenario, but a neither/nor and something else besides. As I shall attempt to show, while such either/or scenarios are sometimes choreographed within the texts, any clear patterns soon disappear as the reader becomes disorientated by shifts in the terms of engagement or the inclusion of overwhelming quantities of superfluous detail.

Reading Amorós and Ganivet purely to corroborate their role as precursors obscures their affinities with earlier authors. Similarly, to have metafiction and the self-reflexive text as sole or principal mechanism for revealing these affinities risks reifying the notion that the degree of literary complexity of a work is a function of the moment in which it was written. Over the following pages, I shall try to show how *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, *Historia de un pueblo* and *La conquista* all revolve around a vacuum created by metafictional devices, but also by their approach to genre and to temporality. Readers can try, endlessly, to position themselves within this vacuum without ever finding a steady direction of travel or place to settle: Flores's many narrators are set adrift in time and space and they pull readers in multiple directions; Amorós's fantasy world initially seems populated and full, but the setting becomes increasingly nebulous the more closely it is examined; and the putative advances of civilization made in Ganivet's imaginary country by a supremely unreliable narrator are quickly discredited once they are stripped of their aggrandizing narrative. Reading Flores, Amorós and Ganivet with an eye to the self-conscious text, and to generic miscellany and future time, reveals a body of nineteenth-century Spanish literature that feasts on contradiction and paradox, and that understands knowledge to be contingent, temporality to be directionless, and both temporality and knowledge to be radically unstable.

### **Ayer, hoy y mañana, ó La fé, el vapor y la electricidad: cuadros sociales de 1800, 1850 y 1899 dibujados a la pluma por D. Antonio Flores**

*Ayer, hoy y mañana* is in many ways a very frustrating read. It took shape out of fragments scattered across the pages of nineteenth-century periodicals, yet in its final form it assumed colossal proportions: the complete work, in three parts, comprises seven volumes of between 300 and 500 pages each. Reading these pages in succession from beginning to end is, in a way, to read against the current of the work, which is characterized by a dearth of plot-lines, episodic arrangements of *cuadros*, and relentless digression and deferral. Re-reading it is equally frustrating, though for different reasons. Interpretive avenues open up invitingly, only to turn into dead ends or become side tracks. Hypotheses that at first seem cogent must be discarded when they are checked against cross references to subsequent chapters or pages, sometimes even to the very next sentence. It is impossible for the reader to establish a position, in either a literal or a figurative sense. He or she (there are direct addresses to both) is left with nowhere to stand, nowhen from which to look forward or backward, no anchor point from which to view and understand the relative categories of past, present and future. There is no doubt that this is deliberate; the intense use of metafictional devices makes that much clear. Furthermore, the work draws on the inherently miscellaneous nature of *costumbrismo* and the nineteenth-century collections of sketches. While it purports to outline the characteristics of a moment in time, a temporal 'type', it simultaneously demonstrates the impossibility of such a project.



*Ayer*, the first instalment of Flores's work, appeared in 1853. A second, slightly amplified version appeared in 1863, this time followed quickly by *Hoy* and *Mañana* in 1863 and 1864.<sup>4</sup> Successive volumes were advertised repeatedly in the press both before and after the complete work became available.<sup>5</sup> Each of the three parts consists of a series of loosely connected *cuadros de costumbres* (totalling 54, 53 and 40 respectively), purporting to describe scenes typical of Spain's past, present and future. Each part is framed by a collection of prologues, introductions, dedications and epilogues. In *Ayer* a small number of characters, such as the court hairdresser Ambrosio Tenacilla, have names and make repeated appearances (Ginger 2005, 217; Rubio Cremades II, 77). In *Hoy*, very few individuals have names, while only *Mañana* contains what might be properly called a plot – a take on the familiar story of a country boy who arrives in the city and must negotiate the social customs and hierarchies. Venancio travels to Madrid from Extremadura, attempts to get elected as a politician, sees Safo and falls immediately in love. On the very final pages, Safo and Venancio return to Arcadia where they live happily ever after with Safo's new mother-in-law. Certain motifs reappear across all three parts and invite explicit comparison. 'Una madrugada en 1800' in *Ayer* is followed by 'Una madrugada en 1850' in *Hoy* and 'Una madrugada en 1899' in *Mañana*. Similarly, 'Los gritos de Madrid' in *Ayer* becomes 'Los gritos de Madrid ó la publicidad en 1850' in *Hoy* and 'El árbol de la publicidad' in *Mañana*.

Despite being unique, not least because it combines *costumbrismo* with futuristic fiction, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* has received relatively little attention as a work of literature. Instead, it has been used as documentary evidence in socio-historical accounts of the period. Rubio Cremades's lengthy commentary in his biography of Flores focuses on the representation of the clergy and the use of dialogue, regional dialect and proverbs. In his view, the 'intención o propósito del autor es reflejar con la mayor objetividad posible la sociedad de su época' (Rubio Cremades II, 76). However, this claim must be treated with caution, for reasons that will become clear over the following pages. Aranguren reproduces lengthy passages from *Hoy* in his social history *Moral y sociedad*, while he sometimes considers *Ayer* as if it were a source of factual and first-hand information, using it to substantiate morally charged claims about the social, sexual and ethical mores of nineteenth-century Spain. In this account, Flores is 'el escritor costumbrista más interesante para conocer los usos de la época moderada' (Aranguren 117).

Lee Fontanella was one of the first twentieth-century scholars to engage with *Ayer, hoy y mañana* as a literary text, in the context of his broader discussion of technology, aesthetics and the periodical press (Fontanella 1982, 1982a). Ginger, in an important study that builds on Fontanella's work, describes it as 'one of the most important texts in nineteenth-century Spanish literature' (Ginger 2005, 210). Ginger differentiates Flores's approach to the representation of modern life from that of other contemporary *costumbrista* writers, in particular Mesonero Romanos: while Mesonero believed that the increased pace of change in modern life made it impossible to represent modernity, Flores thought that modern life made everything more visible by eliminating privacy and providing the means of representation in a plethora of new instruments and technologies (Ginger 2005, 210–11). Flores's concerns

<sup>4</sup> The 1853 version contains illustrations which do not appear in the 1863–4 version. Four additional *cuadros* were added to the 1863–4 edition: 'La fiesta de la aldea', 'La fiesta del santo', 'Al amor de la lumbre' and 'Manolos y chisperos ó el Lavapiés y el Barquillo'. The *cuadro* 'Cuajada y baile, que pasa Dios por mi calle' appears in the later edition under a new title, 'Fandango y broma y arda la casa toda', and like a number of other *cuadros* has been substantially revised and extended.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the full-page spread in the *Diario Oficial de Avisos de Madrid* (7 January 1853), n.p. An article in the liberal periodical *El Clamor Público* in 1854 suggests that the release of *Hoy* was delayed by the censors: 'obra que alcanzó mucha popularidad, y fue interrumpida por la tiránica censura de los gobiernos anteriores'. See *El Clamor Público. Periódico del Partido Liberal* (1 December 1854), n.p.

derive in turn from a perceived disassociation of representation from authentic personality that characterizes modernity. In a similar vein, Catherine Sundt contends that 'Flores's real psychological fears in the context of modernity were related to the creation of vanity and the loss of the individual in the face of excessive representation' (Sundt 67). Yet as Sundt also points out, Flores constantly used new technologies to promote his own work, particularly in his role as editor of *El Laberinto*, and he often disseminated information about new technologies. Rebecca Haidt has further shown that *Ayer, hoy y mañana* confronts the proliferation of material enabled by new technologies (Haidt 2009).

Ginger, Sundt and Haidt all take the view that *Ayer, hoy y mañana* is concerned with the ways society was changing. They therefore work on the basis that *Ayer, hoy y mañana* is about change. Thus, according to Ginger, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* expresses Flores's 'intense sense that modernity is utterly unlike the past' (Ginger 2005, 217). In the following paragraphs, I both agree and disagree with these views: *Ayer, hoy y mañana* simultaneously endorses and disavows the existence of distinct historical moments; it deliberately sets out contradictory ideas about the nature of time and historical knowledge, and it does this by making a virtue of the plurality of voices and perspectives permitted by the form of the nineteenth-century sketch.

In her book *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century: European Journalism and its Physiologies, 1830–50*, Martina Lauster vindicates the literature of types and explores the large collaborative collections published throughout Europe in the 1830s and 1840s. She pays particular attention to the dialogues that took place both within their pages and across national boundaries. These collections offer sophisticated ways of representing and participating in contemporary society and the production of knowledge. For Lauster, these collections are remarkable for their ability to accommodate an extraordinarily diverse range of materials and perspectives: 'as bodies of knowledge they allow full scope for diversity within a cognitive superstructure that is always in evidence' (Lauster, 211). *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, though not a collaborative venture of the sort that Lauster discusses, also deals with 'an astonishing variety of components and perspectives' (Lauster, 211). As a whole, it consists of three overarching *cuadros de costumbres*: 1800, faith; 1850, steam; and 1899, electricity. Each *cuadro* is in turn an aggregate of descriptions of the constitutive and defining features of the 'type' – three spirits of three ages. Each of these unique moments can incorporate potentially endless amounts of specific detail, folded into the numerous sub-*cuadros*. However, reading the three parts of *Ayer, hoy y mañana* against each other, as the text explicitly invites us to do, shows how these parts undermine their own temporal classifications; the work consistently fails to uphold clear distinctions between its constitutive historical moments. This echoes the contradiction at the heart of *costumbrismo*, as explained so lucidly by Lee Fontanella in 1982. For Fontanella, the fundamental premise of the literature of types will always disintegrate. He says of *Los valencianos pintados por sí mismos* that 'the fact that a book of different *valenciano* type sketches follows – which by their very existence *particularize* the essential *valenciano* – indicates that the basic type truly does not resist analysis' (Fontanella 1982, 186). Eventually, the sheer volume of material and the proliferation of examples make it impossible to maintain the coherence of the single 'type'.

In *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, the breakdown of *costumbrismo* manifests itself in a staged attempt, and the conspicuous failure of this attempt, to maintain distinctions between unique historical moments. An illustration of this process of collapse can be found in the playful treatment of metaphors and images that associate light and darkness with movement through time. An entourage of narrators convey continuous stages of movement away from natural cycles and towards artificial rhythms. The technological changes, both real and imagined, on which these developments depend take society out of darkness, inundating it with excessive and disorienting light. In *Ayer*, society was regulated by weather and season. Geographical specificities were manifested in local idiom and closely tied to religious observance:



Cuando andaba los *cebaos y gordos* por las calles, ya se sabia que estaba cerca el nacimiento del Hijo de Dios; nadie ignoraba que era día de vigilia al oír pregonar la *espinaca como albahaca*, y los de Jarama *vivitos*, y para saber que había resuscitado el Señor, bastaba oír gritar *¡el medio cabrito!*... (2: 415–6)

In *Hoy*, the narrator comments in far from favourable tones, as Haidt notes, on the practice of visiting Madrid to look at shop windows illuminated by the new gaslights (Haidt 2009, 310). Such displays awaken dangerous desires in young women and torture the starving poor with sumptuous pictures of abundant food. Moving into *Mañana*, the electric lights are so bright that the narrator of 'Una madrugada en 1899' cannot be sure dawn has broken. Doña Ruperta's desire to look at the shop windows lit up at night is described as simple and quaint, a charming relic of tomorrow's past. Yet as her savvy guide explains, illuminated *escaparates* have been rendered obsolete by the new street lighting:

ahora ya no se pone luz en los escaparates, porque no la necesitan. El alumbrado eléctrico ilumina lo bastante para que se vean bien los artículos que hay de muestra, que por otra parte tienen poco que ver, porque casi siempre son los mismos. (7: 155)

Precisely here, where the text deals with technological developments, we might expect decisive confirmation of the differences between past, present and future, a clear characterization or a confident assertion of the unique nature of the spirit of each age. Instead, Flores notes how quickly innovations become dated. Doña Ruperta's guide says:

hay mas luz que si fuera de día. Y de poco tiempo á esta parte se ha echado á perder mucho el alumbrado. Yo no sé si consiste en que vá escaseando el cobre ó en la mala calidad del zinc, pero ello es que la luz no es tan limpia como al principio. (7: 159)

As Wolfgang Schivelbusch says of the tower lighting that illuminated Detroit in the 1880s, 'The same light that thirty years earlier had been admired as a triumph of technology and democracy was now seen to be inadequate and dysfunctional' (Schivelbusch 127). Flores shows us that change is a constant, and that novelty soon wears off. This is as true in the future as it is in the present and as it was in the past.

It is not at all clear that Flores's contemporary readers were always willing to embrace or even acknowledge ambivalence in the text. According to Francisco de Paula Madrazo, writing in 1864 just after the publication of the first volume of *Mañana* but before the release of the second volume, Flores's work represents a denunciation of superficial modern society, at the same time as it illustrates material progress: 'nos revela de mano maestra de qué manera marchan juntos el progreso de las sociedades y la relajacion de los sentimientos morales'. Thus, according to Madrazo, Flores 'ofrece á nuestros ojos el cuadro palpitante de verdad de aquellos españoles de 1800 que tanta ventaja llevaban á los de 1864, si no en civilisacion y adelantos, al menos en hidalguia y en inmaculada pureza' (Madrazo 143, 141). Madrazo is particularly horrified by the unfeminine behaviour of Spanish women of the future. His interpretation seems to be corroborated by *cuadros* such as 'Humo animal y humo mineral ó los refectorios y los talleres', where the narrator decries the ascendancy of anonymous money and lambasts the succession of *desamortizaciones* which, he claims, stripped the country of its artistic heritage (see especially 3: 137–40). Yet even this seemingly categorical attack is qualified by the suggestion that the *desamortizaciones* were merely the continuation of old practices under new names:

han de ver nuestros hijos la nueva desamortización de lo que ahora se está amortizando, porque como ya hemos dicho al principio de este artículo, las ventas de los bienes nacionales, no se han hecho de manera que salgan de las manos muertas á las vivas, sino para echarse al muerto de un mostrenco á otro más mostrenco aun. Esto es, para pasar de la comunidad de los frailes á la comunidad de los bolsistas. (3: 147)

'Una madrugada en 1850' is another example that initially appears to tally with Madrazo's reading. In it, the only people on the streets at dawn are reprobates and idlers from the night before. Read in isolation, this might look like a simplistic moral judgement on the nocturnal habits of Flores's contemporaries, intended to contrast sharply with halcyon days of old. Yet if we turn back to 'Una madrugada en 1800', we might reconsider this view. The citizens of 1800 avoided the streets at night, not because of the lack of street lighting nor because of their superior moral character, but for the very prosaic reason that, by night, the day's excrement was tipped out of windows into the street for collection the following morning. More damning still is the description of poverty in 1800, within a *cuadro* praising the charitable work of religious institutions: 'Cuadro de hambre perpétua, que se veía diariamente en todas las porterías de los conventos de Madrid, y de otras muchas poblaciones de España./Cuadro desgarrador, que los hombres de HOY quisieran borrar de la historia de AYER' (1: 224). Indeed, far from bearing out Madrazo's reading, Flores pre-empted it by pointing out that people have always been and will always be nostalgic about the past, and that their nostalgia will lead them to erase from history the parts that do not support their worldview. Thus, in *Ayer*, an old man says 'Vé vd. como yo tengo razón en lo que digo de que la sociedad está pervertida' (1: 142). There will always be people, like Madrazo, who claim that society is in decline.

Madrazo's reading, and the scholarly use of *Ayer*, *hoy y mañana* as a historical document rather than a work of fiction, are curious because they seem to ignore the complexity, ambiguity and playfulness of the work. In a way, they seem to bear out one of the propositions made repeatedly over its thousands of pages: history itself is fabricated through the wilful idealization or demonization of the past and the future. The question is not so much whether such and such an event occurred, or whether Flores approves or disapproves, but that multiple, multiplying and contradictory views occupy the same pages. By providing the material for diverse and apparently incompatible interpretations, Flores ensured that the reception and interpretation of his text proves his point. Thus, while we are sometimes invited to reflect on the possibility that attempts to idealize the past are wilful acts of misrepresentation, we are also unhelpfully informed that this is nothing new. The past and the future will change with every new viewpoint that emerges, making it impossible to establish a fixed position from which to observe the unfolding of human history.

Pitting change against continuity and rejecting nostalgic rewritings of the past, Flores's text is profoundly sceptical about historical knowledge, and specifically about the cumulative and progressive nature of historical knowledge. The hero of *Mañana*, Venancio, and his mother Doña Ruperta – who though from 1899 are really from another geo-temporal location (Extremadura) and therefore out of time – are confused by situations that they do not understand. According to the logic of progress, and the historiographical assumptions on which it depends, it makes perfect sense that Venancio and Doña Ruperta are unable to read the future. This is because the cumulative processes of progress require those who live in the present to understand the past; they must be able to apprehend its difference and supersede it. Without recognition of this difference and the implicit claim to superiority, it would be impossible to know that progress has taken place. There would be no standard against which to judge its achievements. Conversely, a coherent model of progress requires that people from

earlier periods be incapable of understanding the future, as this would gainsay claims about cumulative and ever-increasing knowledge. Instead of confirming this, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* offers a mirror image which reverses the direction of travel. In the introduction to *Ayer*, the readers of 1850 are warned that they will not be able to understand what they see on their journey into the past. And while *Mañana* is indecipherable to Venancio and his mother, *Hoy* is equally so to the inhabitants of *Mañana*. Thus, characters posing for photographs in fancy dress will present the future with an enigma: '¡Quisiéramos nosotros ver á los eruditos de MAÑANA asegurando, una de dos cosas: ó que las órdenes militares militaban en 1850, ó que la fotografía se conocia ya en el siglo XVI' (4: 112). Far from providing an objective record of the present for future generations, photography is a mechanism that can generate anachronism. As Haidt argues in her broader discussion of nineteenth-century Spanish photography, Flores shows that 'precise replication of the *appearance* of a body, in no way guarantees the viewer's understanding of the ethical or moral *implications* of that body in space and time' (Haidt 2011, 21). The riddle that Flores's photographer poses to his future viewers can never be solved because it is a false choice, but this will not prevent people from claiming to have done so. Madrazo, with his conservative, selective and univocal interpretation of *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, unwittingly proves the point. This is not something that Flores identifies purely as a product of mid-century modernity, but as a flaw in historiographical assumptions broadly speaking and, more specifically, historicity as understood from the supposed vantage point of progress.

Crucially, in this assessment, the role stipulated for the reader and the presence of multiple and untrustworthy narrators have a central place in the way the text works. *Ayer, hoy y mañana* is conspicuously conscious of its many different readers. Thus, a cosy invitation is issued in *Hoy*: 'Tú y yo, lector, tú y yo, que hemos tenido la dicha de nacer después que nuestros padres, somos los maravillosos autores de las infinitas maravillas que encierra este mundo maravillero en que vivimos' (3: 3). Initially, this seems to offer a fixed temporal position and to invoke a common history shared by writer and reader, along the lines described by Haidt: 'as Flores conceived of it, literary *costumbrismo's* greater truthfulness lay in the fact that it involved a relationship between people – a writer and a reader – that enjoyed a direct connection of mutual recognition in a given place and time' (Haidt 2011, 26). Yet the reliability of this relationship is often called into question; while the expression 'tú y yo' evokes a common point of origin and inclusion in a specific group, an address to only those readers who were born after their parents does not in fact narrow the field. Nevertheless, whatever their origins, readers are required to submit to the narrator's control: 'Cierra los ojos, recoge el aliento, muérdete la lengua y déjame que, atado de pies y de manos, te lleve HOY al cementerio de los hombres de AYER' (1: xvii). They must be malleable and adapt to circumstances: 'AYER te rogamos que no replicaras ni discutieras, y HOY te encargamos y aun te exigimos, que hagas todo lo contrario' (3: xx). They are continuously given instructions, 'no te apresures, lector' (1: 83); made to speak, 'tú lector dirás, ¿y cómo es posible que toda la gente principal de Madrid cupiese en aquella cueva?' (1: 98); or are offered comments on their stipulated response, 'pues es verdad, lector, has acertado' (1: 94). At times, the narrator affects sincerity and openness with readers, 'Quiero que entre tú y yo no haya secreto alguno' (7: 32); at times he is coy: 'necesito haber adquirido una gran confianza con los lectores' (1: 105).

All this amounts to a demand that the reader position and identify herself, but the text also makes it impossible for her to do so by deliberately removing or undermining any fixed temporal anchors. From the start we are confronted with misleading or playful prologues, introductions, forewords or epilogues signed with comic names, all of which encourage scepticism. For example, the prologue to *Hoy* is signed by the 'Barón de Taravilla, Académico de su lengua', but the author quickly confesses that the Baron is a work of fiction: 'el rubor que me

causan los elogios que yo mismo me veo obligado á publicar de mí mismo' (3: x). Similarly, the *cuadro* 'Retrato al daguerreotipo del «Diario Oficial de Avisos de Madrid»' (3: 23–37) reproduces an issue of this imaginary *Diario* spread across several pages, while the spoof *El Astro del Siglo. Diario político, liberal, imparcial é independiente* includes contributions from 'El pollo dandy' (5: 193) and 'Sabino Rumores y Novedades' (5: 219). While the sheer volume of metafictional devices creates a chaotic impression, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* sometimes seems to offer a more sustained reflection on the concept of authorship and authority. It stages a disconnect between text and implied author; the mechanisms by which words arrive on the page assert their independence from the author as we move from past to present to future. In *Ayer*, a pen queries the form and content of the text it produces. The pen distinguishes between *tipos* and *retratos*. A piece about the characteristics of a type, specifically a 'beata', is not a cause for mutiny; but a description of an individual beata, 'La beata Clara', is a different matter entirely and prompts non-cooperation (2: 214–15). Curiously, it is exactly here where the conventions of *costumbrismo* and the literature of types break down, that authorial control also disintegrates. In *Mañana*, the insurrection assumes industrial proportions. The 'árbol de publicidad' is a machine powered by footsteps around the Puerta del Sol which automatically produces text without the need for an author at all: 'en sus ramas brotan de repente multitud de hojas escritas, que vuelan á millares por el espacio' (6: 49). It is the future's answer to the more modest 'gritos' and town criers of *Ayer*. In a later episode, Venancio opens a door to reveal 'cuatro jóvenes que escribían á la voz [vez?] lo que les dictaba Safo' (6: 167). Ginger has observed that this is 'a clear allusion to the popular author Manuel Fernández y González', noted for his prolificacy (Ginger 2005, 212). It is also a comment on female authorship. A number of Spanish nineteenth-century futuristic fictions expressed concerns about redefinitions of gender roles (see, for example: Alas; Carrión and Coello; Perrín and Palacios). Safo is obviously named after the Greek poet, but instead of creating her own work, tomorrow's Safo borrows documents. Venancio discovers this when he reads his own love letter reprinted in the *Boletín de Antigüedades* (6: 123). She furthermore delegates the manual labour of writing to others, leaving the source of language doubly distanced from the final text. This ironic commentary on female authorship and creativity is combined with the prospect that in the future it will be difficult to produce anything original; in such a world, women would make ideal authors.

Once again, it seems as if Flores is offering a conservative commentary on social change, a warning to present and future generations about the direction and nature of innovation, about a world where gender roles are no longer clear, where individuals have no authentic personality and where literature and language are mechanical by-products. Nevertheless, when the text is read as a whole, and its cacophony of voices and perspectives taken into account, this reading becomes less assured. Instead, something much more interesting emerges: doubt is cast on the very idea of an authorial voice, rooted in a specific time and place, capable of producing an authoritative account, and secure in the reader's ability to interpret correctly the words on the page. Instead, we are offered an author and a text that are quite radically separated from each other, though admittedly this is perhaps most noticeable in *Mañana*.

To explain the inclusion of a first-hand description of the future, Flores appeals to contemporary theories of mesmerism and spiritism. The author of *Mañana* is supplanted entirely by his own arm, which functions as the medium for the spirit of Merlin the magician, the principal narrator of *Mañana*: 'la gracia consiste en que el dueño del brazo que escribe no tiene con él contacto alguno' (6: xiv). Once the introductions are over, Merlin dispatches the author entirely: 'Gracias sean dadas á Dios, querido lector, por haber llegado la hora de que tú y yo estemos solos y libres de la enfadosa presencia del autor de esta obra' (6: 16). Merlin

then detaches himself from any temporal anchors, and claims to be an observer giving a first-hand account from nowhere and nowhen: 'ahora no soy otra cosa que un fluido invisible, impalpable é imponderable' (6: xx). He even invites readers to abandon their existence in time and space altogether: 'desearía que [...] dejases esa tierra de duelos y quebrantos [...] y vinieses á este espacio infinito' (6: 197). Speaking from this impossible perspective, Merlin echoes a common trope and says that in the past people had looked back in time for guidance, while in the future they will only look forward:

[L]as generaciones creyeron que llenaban su mision sobre la tierra con admirar y bendecir y hasta idolotrar á las que les habian precedido, y todo el tiempo que perdieron en volver la vista atrás, dejaron de dar pasos adelante.

Ahora sucede todo lo contrario; y por eso, lector á cada paso que demos ha de crecer tu asombro y tu espanto. (6: 29–30)

It is tempting to conclude from this that Flores believed the past no longer provided answers and guidance and that some fundamental shift in human understanding of time had taken place. This would align neatly with the paradigmatic shift in temporality identified by Koselleck in *Futures Past* (2004): a transformation from thinking about the past as a collection of exemplary stories applicable in a world where the rules of play remain the same, to one where the future holds out the promise of a radically different human experience. Nevertheless, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* belies this paradigm shift by repeatedly undermining its own ability to establish clear differences between past, present and future. The claim in the lines just quoted that the past could no longer serve as a model for a radically changed world is followed immediately with a reassertion of permanent continuity and repetition: 'la verdad es que *nihil novum sub sole*' (6: 30). Flores thus juxtaposes mutually exclusive understandings of temporality while his narrator attempts to dispense entirely with fixed positions in time, all in the context of a broader narrative strategy of incorporating mutually contradictory statements. While Merlin's placelessness seems to characterize *Mañana* in particular, in fact it illustrates well the approach adopted across the three parts of the work. A multiplicity of perspectives are placed together in such a way that they are all brought equally into play and into doubt, making an endorsement of any single one impossible. Thus the mutinous pen of *Ayer*, instead of writing what the author wants, recites contradictory proverbs: 'Aunque por el hilo se saca el ovillo, y el paño se conoce por la muestra, también es cierto que una golondrina no hace verano' (2: 213).

*Ayer, hoy y mañana* is ostentatiously contradictory. Paradox and contradiction feature prominently throughout, and generally remain unresolved. The work exploits to the full the opportunities offered by the literature of types for including a multiplicity of examples and perspectives, thereby contributing to the disintegration of the premise of the genre and the possibility of establishing sets of distinctions and typical characteristics. In showing how there are always further examples, and counterexamples and counter-counterexamples, and that therefore all interpretations are always partial and selective, the text shows how history has been, is and will be fabricated. Consequently, there is no way that progress can be categorically measured. Nor can it be denied. There is simply no reliable and fixed perspective from which differences can be established and historical epochs characterized as unique collections of typical traits. History requires an authoritative voice, and that voice requires a time and place from which to speak. In place of this, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* proffers a disembodied magician floating through an atemporal ether. Maybe there is nothing new under the sun, maybe change is continuous and progressive, maybe things were better in the past, or maybe they will be better in the future. Until you can assume a fixed position, it is impossible to know, and as soon as you assume a fixed position you are opening yourself up to the charge



of partiality and selective interpretation or wilful manipulation of the evidence. The only alternative is cacophony.

### Historia de un pueblo

In *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, Flores navigates problematic questions of authority and authorship. *Historia de un pueblo* is reluctant to admit that the author, Juan Bautista Amorós, exists at all. In targetting *costumbrismo*, and deploying it against itself, Flores exploits contradiction and surfeit. Amorós's text also exploits the problems of excess. It fashions an alternative world on a massive scale, but while this world initially appears to be a solid product of carefully worked out detail, closer scrutiny reveals gaping holes in its fabric, large blanks on its imaginary map. As these gaps become more and more apparent, the entire project begins to disintegrate.

*Historia de un pueblo* comprises three works set in the fictional country of Atargea (or Atarjea) and narrated for the most part by Amorós's heteronym, Silverio Lanza: *Noticias biográficas acerca del Excmo. Sr. Marqués del Mantillo* (1889), *Ni en la vida ni en la muerte* (1890) and *Artuña* (1893).<sup>6</sup> The title of the series is given in the front matter of *Artuña*: 'Esta obra se anunció con título de *Los vicios de la mujer*. Forma parte de la *Historia de un pueblo*.—J.B.A.'<sup>7</sup> The series also encompasses two works that were never published, perhaps never written.<sup>8</sup> Epigrammatic in style, it exploits numerous texts, genres and forms of discourse: the nineteenth-century novel of adultery; Plutarch's *Lives*; scientific and military jargon; the detailed descriptions of the realist novel; biographies of politicians; obituaries and eulogies; even contemporary reviews of Amorós's work. *Noticias* is a posthumous account of the life of the politician, statesman and Atargean army general, Nicasio Álvarez, the Marqués del Mantillo, as told by Silverio Lanza, Amorós's heteronym and homodiegetic narrator. *Ni en la vida* is a story of corruption, harassment and necrophilia in the small town of Villaruín, also narrated by Lanza. Paratexts suggest that Lanza is also the narrator of *Artuña*, though his interventions here are less explicit. The main characters are Luis Noisse, a captain of artillery returned from the wars in Aurelia, his pathologically chaste wife Marcela Brethers whose first child is stillborn, and his lover Águeda who gives birth to Luis's son, then leaves the infant in the care of villagers in Villaruín, before becoming Marcela's lover. Towards the end of the novel, Luis sets out in search of this illegitimate child only to discover that the boy is dead. Before his premature death, the child had been nursed by a goat, the 'artuña' of the title. Returning to Granburgo, Luis thinks he has discovered a way of nourishing people with air, only himself to die of starvation.

On a first reading, the use of a fictional country looks like a fairly conventional nineteenth-century device. Spanish readers were familiar with aliases such as Vetusta, Orbajosa or Villabermeja. Indeed, Pardo Bazán commented explicitly on this in a prologue to *La Tribuna*, set in the fictional town of Marineda:

Quien desee conocer el plano de Marineda, búsquelo en el atlas de mapas y planos privados, donde se colecciona, no sólo el de Orbajosa, Villabermeja y Coteruco, sino el de las ciudades de R\*\*\*, de L\*\*\* y de X\*\*\*, que abundan en las novelas románticas. Este privilegio concedido al novelista de crearse un mundo suyo propio, permite más libre

<sup>6</sup> 'Artuña' is defined in the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española as 'Entre pastores, oveja parida que ha perdido la cría'.

<sup>7</sup> The front matter is not included in Prada's edition but can be viewed on the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica of the Biblioteca Nacional de España <<http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000075918&page=1>>.

<sup>8</sup> In *La rendición de Santiago* (1907), Lanza says: 'escribí una novelita con título de *Las hecatombes de Saida*. /Es el último [tomo] de la serie *Historia de un pueblo* [...] de ella sólo he publicado tres tomos' (I: 461–5), while in *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte*, he claims: 'Todos los lugares a que me refiero en este cuento los describí prolijamente en el *Viaje de Villaruín a Granburgo*' (II: 194).



inventiva y no se opone a que los elementos todos del microcosmos estén tomados, como es debido, de la realidad. (Pardo Bazán 47–8)

In Pardo Bazán's view, even if readers can easily identify Marineda with La Coruña, the use of an imaginary landscape allows the author greater freedom without sacrificing verisimilitude. Amorós echoes these sentiments when, in *Artuña*, Luis explains to a guest at a party that the author 'Moimente', who was being harassed by the police, 'llegó a crear una nación fantástica con su historia y geografía particulares, y, no obstante su prudencia, se vio envuelto en un proceso sin más resultado que injurias e indiferencias de la crítica que sobrellevó con cierta filosofía' (I: 71). Critics are of course justified in reading Amorós's fiction as a trenchant critique of politics and society in Restoration Spain, for many reasons. Nevertheless, the paracosm created in *Historia de un pueblo* is something other than Spain by any other name. And, if we have not interrogated the use of geographical aliases such as Vetusta, Marineda, Villabermeja or Orbajosa as much as we might, this is equally or perhaps even more true of Atargea.

The information that can be gleaned about Atargea is both detailed and sketchy. We know that the capital of Atargea and its empire is Granburgo, that this town was once called Level-Hamlet, but was 'convertido en Granburgo por el abuelo de Salvio V' (*Artuña*, I: 161). A character in *Ni en la vida* compares Granburgo to a domesticated jungle, the Jardin d'Acclimatacion which opened in Paris in 1860 (II: 205). A train travels between Atargea and Fóculo (*Noticias*, II: 189). Atargea has conquered Aurelia (*Artuña*, I: 90), and at some point Bourglaid became a 'provincia separada' (*Noticias*, II: 154–5). Spain exists in this fictional world as a separate country: Lanza claims to be Spanish (*Noticias*, II: 90); Luis and Agueda drink fake Spanish wine (*Artuña*, I: 165); Nicasio Álvarez visits Spain during a period of political exile (*Noticias*, II: 141). In *La rendición de Santiago* (1907), a novel set in Spain that is not part of the series, Lanza alludes to a visit to Atargea. He boards a ship in Cadiz, then, 'A tres millas de la costa transbordé a una lancha de vapor; en el muelle me esperaba un automóvil, y a las quince horas llegué a Granburgo, capital del Estado' (I: 463). This description exemplifies the nebulous use of detail that characterizes *Historia*: we know how and at what time Lanza arrives, but we cannot identify the exact location or calculate how many days have elapsed. In constructing the fictional setting, Amorós does not follow the example of travel narratives, with their detailed descriptions and exhaustive aspirations (Ganivet does do this in *La conquista*, as the next section of this article will show). Instead, readers must work hard to join together the scraps of information that are casually inserted and form an impression of a fuller world surrounding the characters, events and locations. The existence of a complex history and society is implied, and broad contours are suggested, but the details are never filled in and, rather like the supposedly unique character of *costumbrista* types, this history and society tend to disintegrate on closer analysis.

Owen Robinson has said that the fact that William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha is 'removed from the plane of empirical fact is vital to the effect of the series in which it appears' (Robinson 2). Like Yoknapatawpha, Atargea is removed from the plane of empirical fact. Indeed, Amorós goes even further when he gives his imaginary place an imaginary time. Precise dates are difficult to determine, however. Rosenberg and Grafton, drawing on Hayden White, say of the *Annals of St. Gall*: 'references to time are strangely gnomonic: in the year 732, for example, the text indicates that Charles Martel "fought the Saracens on Saturday", but it does not specify which Saturday' (Rosenberg and Grafton 12). Amorós's approach to dates is similarly gnomonic: 'tres días antes del Pacto de Separación' and 'seis años después'; 'la revolución de marzo'; 'la revolución de octubre' (*Noticias*, II: 154, 106, 121). One of the many revolutions occurs in '96 and is mentioned in *Artuña* (I: 59), which was published in 1893. Does this date then

refer to 1796, 1896, 1996 or even 2096? A single line in *Ni en la vida* makes 1996 the most probable answer: 'Se figura la acción en Villaruín, población próxima a Granburgo (capital de la Atargea), en el siglo XX del cristianismo' (II: 170). The fictional series is thus set in the future, though unlike *Ayer, hoy y mañana* there are no obvious references to Souvestre, Mercier, Wells or even Flores. In a way, though, this process of deduction is misguided. Even with this clue from *Ni en la vida*, it is pointedly difficult to pin down the temporal setting.

As with *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, readings of the different works that constitute *Historia de un pueblo* have been organized around a particular narrative of Spanish literary history, and this may have obscured some of the complexities and intricacies of the text, particularly in relation to genre and style. In one of the few book-length studies of Amorós's work, García Reyes claims that artistic ambitions played second fiddle to moral censure. While much of Amorós's writing could be considered naturalist, some works, including *Artuña*, contain elements that too closely resemble the *folletín*:

Si la primera parte de la trama se ha mantenido dentro de cauces expositivos bien alieneados y coherentes al narrar Amorós, con indudables dotes, el conflicto marital con su esposa y los amplios diálogos en los que se va tejiendo la atracción erótica de Luis hacia su amante, el segundo tomo, en cambio, tiene marcada tendencia folletinesca. (García Reyes 42)

García Reyes further argues that Amorós has failed to fully assimilate the conventions of realism. This constitutes a failure because it does not align with literary-historical trajectories that mark the *folletín* as an inferior genre belonging more properly to the mid-century, and brand naturalism as superior and more appropriate to *fin de siglo* works.<sup>9</sup> In *Ni en la vida*, the descriptions of the cemetery 'posee vestigios románticos'. Add to this 'cierto costumbrismo' that makes him the descendent of Larra and we get 'esa promiscuidad de tendencias literarias [...] que da carácter raro, chocante a la obra de Amorós; precisamente porque en su tiempo la novela tiende a ser uniforme y simétrica' (García Reyes 45, 47, 49). By discussing *Historia de un pueblo* together with *Ayer, hoy y mañana* and *La conquista*, this article challenges García Reyes's evaluation of nineteenth-century Spanish prose as 'uniforme y simétrica'. However, Amorós's work is undoubtedly generically promiscuous. Rather than commenting in greater depth on the startling effects that this produces, García Reyes instead subsumes Amorós within the Generation of 1898 and judges him accordingly. Segundo Serrano Poncela, in a similar vein, describes the Spanish nineteenth-century literary landscape in less than flattering terms. He too seeks to identify Amorós with Unamuno, Baroja and Azorín. But while generic miscellany is to be admired in the latter group, Amorós's writing 'contiene muchos elementos prosaísticos del siglo XIX de los que no alcanza a liberarse del todo no obstante el visible esfuerzo que, a veces, se percibe' (Serrano Poncela 143). Nil Santiáñez-Tió is less overtly dismissive, and argues that while Amorós subverts the principles of nineteenth-century realism he nevertheless commits aesthetic blunders: 'los materiales, muy diversos, procedan en ocasiones de la más rancia literatura decimonónica [...] [Amorós] echó mano de motivos costumbristas, recursos folletinescos' (Santiáñez-Tió 1993, 37).

An overview of some of the different genres that coexist in *Historia de un pueblo* will illustrate the sheer scope of Amorós's generic promiscuity and the disorientation that this produces. This will make him harder to dismiss as aesthetically naive or to file him away as a literary footnote. It shows how *Historia* constantly pretends to operate within conventional

<sup>9</sup> Haidt has pithily described the place of *costumbrismo* in such trajectories: 'a modern—that is, middle class-oriented—practice [situated] at an early stage of a long nineteenth-century journey culminating (according to the prevailing literary-historical narrative) in the totalizing novels of realism and naturalism' (Haidt 2011, 19).

limits and structures, only to somehow demolish these by failing to follow through on the expectations that they create. *Ni en la vida* opens with a catechetic explanation of the line 'And the Word was made flesh' (John 1: 14): 'Convencidos de que Dios se hizo hombre, pretenden los hombres hacerse dioses. Mal oficio'. The line is glossed with a footnote mocking the principles of catechism: 'Coloco aquí la moraleja para hacer más fácil la lectura de este libro a aquellas personas que no tienen costumbre de entender lo que leen' (II: 167). It is formatted as a play, with a list of characters, 'Personajes (Retratos del natural)', a brief description of the setting, and extensive dialogue. It ends with a letter from Lanza to his doctor. References to Plutarch's *Lives* feature throughout (Lawless 2013). The sheer number of genres that are invoked make it impossible to argue that expectations are thwarted as it is difficult to establish which expectations readers should have established in the first place. *Artuña* includes a series of prefaces, aphorisms and *advertencias* that undermine any subsequent appeals to verisimilitude. When the action finally does start, it does so in media res, with a dialogue between Luis Noisse and his wife, Marcela. The last sentence is symmetrically inconclusive: 'A Juan García volveremos a verle' (I: 380). The chapter 'Antropomorfía' is a self-contained fable in which different animals discuss the failings of humanity and plot to 'conseguir que la pareja humana coma el fruto del árbol del bien y del mal' (I: 351). Luis's experiments with nutrition emulate the scientific romances of Jules Verne or, more specifically perhaps, the mad scientist of Julio Nombela's *La piedra filosofal: historia de un doctor que ha resuelto el problema de vivir sin comer* (1873). Some of the futuristic and mock-scientific *zarzuelas* that were staged during the Restoration period are echoed when Luis's idea becomes popular among the aristocracy: 'se representó una zarzuela titulada *Gloria a Noisse o el nitrógeno asimilable*' (I: 348). Throughout, Luis is unable to separate his personal life from his scientific experiments. His marriage is a failure and the narrator blames Marcela: 'Y si Dios la preguntase: «¿Qué hiciste del bien que te otorgué?» -Ella contestaría: «Volvióse amargura». -«¿Pero sabes que tú fuiste la causa de su perversión?»' (I: 215). As the plot unfolds, Luis's interior monologues oscillate comically between the scientific and the personal, as in the following example when he tries to plan the events of his wedding night:

Pero, ¿quién calcula la trayectoria que describe una desposada para caer en los brazos de su marido? Y sin más datos que el punto de partida y el punto de llegada. Es preciso calcular la atracción del esposo; y la dirección en que actúa; la masa y el volumen de lo atraído, que es la voluntad de la esposa; la inercia, el impulso inicial; el trabajo resistente y lo imprevisto, que esto último es siempre lo que no se puede calcular. (I: 59–60)

Perhaps the most generically diverse of the three, *Noticias* is a political biography, but denies it: 'No escribo una biografía. Doy noticias solamente' (II: 91). As Ricardo Senabre Sempere notes:

Estas *Noticias biográficas* son, en realidad, un relato novelesco en torno a un fabuloso personaje político de un país imaginario. No nos encontramos tan sólo ante una simple invención, sino que ésta se reviste del carácter documental y objetivo propio de la biografía histórica. (Senabre Sempere 98–9)

The text is divided into chapters that give a partial – subjective and incomplete – account of Nicasio Álvarez's political trajectory: 'Nicasio Álvarez, socialista', 'Nicasio Álvarez llega al poder', 'Nicasio Álvarez en el poder', 'Álvarez reaccionario', 'La revolución', 'El imperio', 'Los secretos de Nicasio Álvarez'. Lanza goes to Álvarez's house after his death to collect his personal documents. As if to emphasize how pointless it is to try to reconstruct events, these

documents lead Lanza to a series of clues, ending with the discovery of a death certificate for a man called Nicasio Álvarez 'que murió asesinado a los treinta años de edad, siendo identificado su cadáver por su familia y amigos./Sería el Marqués del Mantillo el asesino de Nicasio Álvarez; y si no, ¿quién era el Marqués del Mantillo?' (II: 155). The biography is abruptly transformed into a murder mystery and the very identity of the biographee called into question. *Noticias* is thus a work of futuristic fiction pretending to be the biography of a dead man, complete with faux documentary evidence and a concluding section leaving readers more in the dark than they were at the start. This is rounded off with an epistolary epilogue dealing with the paradoxical logic of a supposedly paranoid man suffering from a persecution complex when, in fact, they really were out to get him. The unexpected, and the unexpectedly numerous combinations (biography, epistle, travel narrative, *costumbrismo*, eulogy, anecdote, myth, aphorism) disorientate the reader throughout. At the same time, the man who is at the centre of the work evaporates before our eyes.

Delving further into the origins of *Historia de un pueblo* reveals that it is not only the fictional characters and the setting that ultimately appear insubstantial: the author himself performs a sort of vanishing act. In the prologue to his edition of Amorós's novels, Juan Manuel de Prada gives a wonderful account of Amorós's *modus operandi*:

muy probablemente, en su determinación eremítica, en su afán por pertrechar de episodios apócrifos su autobiografía, en su cultivo de ceremonias y costumbres y disciplinas estafalarias, en el cobijo de los heterónimos y las ediciones casi esotéricas que jalonan su bibliografía, anide el propósito común, no ya sólo de elaborarse un personaje que lo suplante, sino el de difuminarse bajo indescifrables misterios. (Prada 8)

Prada highlights Amorós's deliberate dismantling of the line between fact and fiction, while Spanish avant-garde author Ramón Gómez de la Serna said that Lanza 'pasó su vida dialogando como los ventrílocuos' (Gómez de la Serna 17). In practice, the distinction between Amorós and his heteronym Silverio Lanza became so obscured that the names are often used interchangeably. Nevertheless, Silverio Lanza is not Juan Bautista Amorós. Each of the three works in *Historia de un pueblo* includes some form of paratext that insists on this. In *Noticias*, 'El editor, J.B.A.' explains how he had undertaken to publish Lanza's works, regardless of whether they sold or not: the collection of stories, *Cuentecitos sin importancia*, he says, sold three copies (II: 45). The frontmatter of *Artuña* also includes a note signed 'J.B.A.'<sup>10</sup> The title page of *Ni en la vida* similarly implies that Lanza was the author and Amorós the editor.<sup>11</sup> Another novel, *Desde la quilla hasta la tope* (1891), not part of *Historia de un pueblo*, claims to be Lanza's autobiography. Parts of it correspond to Amorós's life, but parts clearly do not. According to Prada, the work consists of 'memorias apócrifas [...] en las que su trasunto o heterónimo, Silverio Lanza, asciende con liviandad los peldaños del escalafón'. Amorós's biographers, Prada continues, 'aun sospechando la inverosimilitud geoméricamente progresiva de estas memorias, aceptaron como veraces los capítulos referidos a las mocedades del protagonista' (Prada 14).

Lanza's first publication, *El año triste*, appeared in 1883. In *El Liberal* that year, José Fernández Bremón described how he chanced upon it in a bookshop. It was presented as the first volume of Lanza's complete works and Bremón read that the editor, Juan Bautista Amorós, intended to publish everything ever written by 'el más fecundo y original de los

<sup>10</sup> The first edition of *Artuña* is available in electronic form from the Biblioteca Nacional de España <<http://catalogo.bne.es>>.

<sup>11</sup> The first edition of *Ni en la vida ni en la muerte* is available from the Biblioteca Digital del Ayuntamiento de Getafe <<http://bibliotecadigital.getafe.es>>.

escritores contemporáneos'. Amorós had provided a list of titles and informed readers that Lanza 'murió en Salamanca el 25 de setiembre de 1882' (Amorós, 1883; Fernández Bremón, n.p.; see also Alcalá Perálvez). Bremón was baffled, as he had never heard of Lanza or Amorós. Nevertheless, *El año triste* and Amorós's subsequent publications were remarkably successful at creating a fictional author. In fact, Lanza/Amorós managed to extend the text itself beyond its own existence not just with a fictional author, but a fictional *obra*, first with the complete works promised in the paratexts of *El año triste*, and later with the apocryphal volumes of *Historia de un pueblo* mentioned in *La rendición de Santiago*.<sup>12</sup> Continuing the game, *Ni en la vida* provided a list of 'Obras de Silverio Lanza' divided into 'Publicadas', 'En prensa' and 'Para publicarse'. The latter included 'Más de cincuenta dramas, comedias y sainetes' and 'Más de doscientos cuentos que no forman colección'.<sup>13</sup>

Amorós explicitly denied that he was Lanza. Writing in *El Motín* in January 1889, he challenged a claim made by Luis París: 'Si yo fuera Silverio Lanza, no se me dispensaría el haberme llamado «el más fecundo y original de los escritores contemporáneos». Si yo fuese Silverio Lanza, el silencio que rodea á Silverio me rodearía á mí' (Amorós 1889). A year later, in February 1890, París began a piece in *El Motín* with the words 'Juan Bautista Amorós, ó Silverio Lanza, como se quiera entender' (París n.p.). While no one was necessarily meant to be fooled, this does show that the pretence was sustained. Indeed, Amorós was not even the only one involved. On 12 March 1894, Federico Urrecha lamented Lanza's recent death in *Los Lunes de El Imparcial*. Yet Urrecha was fully aware that Lanza was an imaginary creation and his death a repeated occurrence. Three years earlier, on 30 November 1891 in *Los Lunes de El Imparcial*, he had solved the Lanza/Amorós mystery: 'El misterio que envolvía á este escritor, tiempo hacia muerto, se aclaró luego; Silverio Lanza no existía ni había existido, y Amorós [...] era el verdadero autor' (Urrecha n.p.). Consequently, it is tempting to speculate that Bremón was also pretending when in 1883 he said he knew neither Lanza nor Amorós.

Ultimately, it is impossible to be entirely sure about anything to do with Amorós, Lanza or the history of his imaginary *pueblo*. Despite the seemingly exhaustive details, and partially because of the multiplicity of genres and styles, the very thing we are reading seems to be disappearing before our eyes. In *Mañana*, Flores's narrator Merlin speaks with a disembodied voice that emerges from a non-existent place and future time. Amorós projects his words onto nowhere and nowhen, via an imaginary writer who dies, repeatedly, only to be resurrected in text in a never-ending loop: 'Cuando vine al mundo encontré hechos mis libros y sus prólogos' (Artuña, I, 40). But the texts in which he is resurrected are at times themselves imaginary. *Historia de un pueblo* constantly takes us back to nothing. This constitutes a radical position of non-existence with respect to the history of a people and a place. It is not so much that progress or historiographical assumptions are interrogated, as they are in *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, but that the very entities that might experience or narrate such experiences turn out never to have existed in the first place. Where history concretizes, *Historia de un pueblo* nebulizes.

### La conquista del reino de Maya por el último conquistador español Pío Cid

The previous two sections of this article have focused on works by important nineteenth-century Spanish authors who have received relatively little scholarly attention. Ganivet's work has been discussed much more widely, and much more frequently, than that of Flores or Amorós. What I hope the following paragraphs will show is that it makes sense to think about the challenges of Ganivet's work through the lenses of unstable narrative origins,

<sup>12</sup> See note 8 above.

<sup>13</sup> See the final page of first edition of *Ni en la vida*, available from Biblioteca Digital del Ayuntamiento de Getafe <<http://bibliotecadigital.getafe.es>>.



generic miscellany, historiographical scepticism, contradiction and paradox that have been identified in Flores, writing around the middle of the nineteenth century, or Amorós's works from the 1880s and 1890s. When considered together, these authors take us quite a far way from García Reyes's assertion that during this period, 'la novela tiende a ser uniforme y simétrica' (García Reyes). In fact, the radical insecurities that arise from the rare qualities of Amorós's prose, or Flores's slippery narrators, and the questions about linear time or narratives of progress that arise through these, offer a highly appropriate starting point from which to approach Ganivet.

*La conquista* was first published in April 1897, months before the 'disaster' of 1898.<sup>14</sup> It was followed in 1898 by the unfinished sequel *Los trabajos del infatigable creador Pío Cid*. Together, these make up the *Ciclo de Pío Cid*.<sup>15</sup> In *La conquista*, Western values and social practices are introduced to the fictional African kingdom of Maya. As it mocks the assumptions underpinning empire, the novel draws on traditions of satire stretching from *Don Quijote* to *Gulliver's Travels*. Indeed, the title alone, *La conquista del reino de Maya por el último conquistador español Pío Cid*, is dense with mock-heroic resonances: Spanish accounts of conquest of the Americas; the Spanish mediaeval epic, *El cantar del Mío Cid*; Virgil's 'pious' Aeneas;<sup>16</sup> and Cervantes's Cide Hamete Benengeli, the imaginary Moorish source for the manuscript of *Don Quijote*.

Reading the travel stories that were so popular in the nineteenth century, the first-person narrator and protagonist Pío García del Cid gets a quixotic taste for adventure. He leaves Spain, first for France, then England and from there to Zanzibar. Travelling inland, Cid sets out to explore the last bit of unknown territory available on the continent. He enters the imaginary country of Maya (Ruanda), where he is captured by natives. Escaping on a hippopotamus, he reaches a city and is hailed as a reincarnation of Arimi, the country's Igana Iguru, spiritual leader, judge and advisor to the king. As Igana Iguru, he sets out to reform the country. His 'improvements' include: street lighting; modernization of agriculture; a state bureaucracy; buffalo fighting; money and commerce; alcohol and alcoholism; slavery, and more besides. Finally, he decides to go home. In Madrid, he gets a job in a government office where he writes the story that we have in our hands. A conversation with Hernán Cortés's ghost in the final chapter induces publication.

Though less outlandish than the narrators of *Ayer, hoy y mañana* or *Historia de un pueblo*, Cid is obviously unreliable. The novel starts with an account of his origins, childhood and early education in Andalusia; by the end of the first paragraph, readers have been warned:

Nada recuerdo de mi niñez [...] recibí tan terrible pedrada en la cabeza, que á poco más me deja en el sitio. De tan funesto accidente me sobrevino la pérdida de la memoria de todos los hechos de mi corta vida pasada. (5)

<sup>14</sup> Ramsden suggests that *La conquista* was written mostly between June and October 1893 when Ganivet was a vice-consul in Antwerp and revised later in 1896 (see Ramsden 3; see also Álvarez Castro 92).

<sup>15</sup> Puertas Moya explains in his doctoral thesis, which considers the *Ciclo* as a form of autobiographical writing, that some critics have also included under this rubric a play entitled *El escultor de su alma* (1899) that was performed and published posthumously (Puertas Moya 686). Seco de Lucena, in the prologue to the 1904 edition of *El escultor de su alma*, mentions Ganivet's plans for a third work, *El testamento de Pío Cid*: 'La infinidad de complejissimas cuestiones que en este admirable y misterioso libro se proponen, anunciaba el autor a sus amigos que quedarían resueltas, y tal vez en sentido muy diferente del que por la lectura de los dos primeros tomos se pudiera colegir, en el *Testamento de Pío Cid*, coronación y remate de la Odisea de este Ulises del mundo moral' (Seco de Lucena, 30). He also provides some information about the first performance of the *El escultor de su alma* (see especially p. 3).

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Britt Arredondo notes how the text mocks Cid's claim to piety and argues that *La conquista* pits the epic against the picaresque, though he does not discuss the reference to 'pious' Aeneas (Britt Arredondo, pp. 120ff).



In the final chapter, 'Sueño del Pío Cid', this early warning is recalled. Strolling around the Escorial one night after his return from Maya, Cid is approached by 'un hombre [...] en quien creí descubrir alguna semejanza con un retrato de Hernán Cortés que, allá en mi niñez, recordaba haber visto' (367). Lest readers miss these semantic echoes ('Nada recuerdo de mi niñez'), the point is reinforced when Cid says to Cortés's ghost: 'considero mi obra más como capricho de mi fantasía que como real y positiva creación' (368).

Despite, or perhaps because of, this unreliable narrator, *La conquista* has prompted substantially different interpretations. Critics have sometimes conflated Cid's views with those of Ganivet. For those who first encounter Ganivet through *La conquista*, this seems simply odd. However, as Álvarez Castro notes, for a long time Ganivet's work 'fue juzgada a partir de un solo libro, el *Idearium español*' (Álvarez Castro 14).<sup>17</sup> Martin-Márquez states, following Agawu-Kakraba, that '*La conquista* cannot be considered a satire because Ganivet employs Pío Cid to convey some of the same ideas that he himself espouses elsewhere', particularly in *Idearium español*. The latter, Martin-Márquez continues, 'is a serious essay evidently devoid of irony' (Martin-Márquez 96, 98). Ramsden considers *Idearium* to be Ganivet's most important work, but shows that it too was taken up in different ways and by wildly different factions:

Ganivet the champion of *européismo*, or Ganivet the staunch traditionalist? Ganivet the upholder of Spain's mission in Africa, or Ganivet the advocate of Spain's withdrawal from such involvements? Ganivet the Democrat, or Ganivet the Falangist? Ganivet the Socialist, or Ganivet the Carlist? And to venture for a moment outside the field of politics: Ganivet the 'católico de pura cepa', or Ganivet the non-catholic [...]? The extent of critical disagreement is truly alarming. (Ramsden 29–30)

Santiáñez-Tió further complicates matters in an article on Ganivet's conceptualization of art and literature: he shows how Ganivet emphasized the importance of unity and coherence across different works by a single author, even when that author rejects realism and embraces subjectivities that are in constant flux (Santiáñez-Tió 1994a, 501). Santiáñez-Tió's main purpose here is to gainsay criticism which characterizes Ganivet as a spontaneous writer who was uninterested in stylistic achievements. Yet how could a writer so apparently concerned with artistic unity have authored two works, one mocking narratives of conquest, civilization and empire, the other earnestly espousing and even justifying some of those same narratives, and how is it that either one of those works can be read in such wildly divergent ways? Martin-Márquez attempts to square the circle by saying that Ganivet changed his mind, a solution all the more convincing because, once said, it seems so obvious (Martin-Márquez, *Disorientations* 99). However, there is another way of looking at *La conquista* which would read apparent inconsistencies as virtues rather than vices and obviate the need to identify a cohesive ideological stance. Such an approach would open out Ganivet's work to interrogations informed as much by authors such as Flores and Amorós as by later authors, in that all three share a radical refusal to maintain or endorse ideological positions, preferring instead to open out and enjoy the contradictory and paradoxical constellations that such positions entail.

Martin-Márquez notes that Ganivet 'had read Jonathan Swift shortly before beginning the novel, and he employs all the techniques of ironic satire' (Martin-Márquez 90). Jean Franco's discussion is still one of the most detailed commentaries on satire in *La conquista*. Her view is that the novel 'with its questioning of the idea of progress is [...] fully in harmony with the mood of the time; what is unusual in the novel is the range and subtlety of the satirical

<sup>17</sup> Ramsden traces and documents the reception of Ganivet's work after his death in 1898. The predominance of the *Idearium* seems to have been clear from very early on in the 1900s (Ramsden 19–22).

technique which in its variety and resourcefulness recalls Swift rather than any of Ganivet's contemporaries' (Franco 34). Features shared by *Gulliver's Travels* and *La conquista*, in Franco's analysis, include the use of a 'typical man of his time' as protagonist and narrator as well as the 'reversal by which the reader suddenly becomes victim' when he identifies with the views of the protagonist only to find these views undermined and the tables turned (Franco 37). Numerous direct references are scattered throughout *La conquista*. The Accas, though a small race, 'no son, ni con mucho, liliputienses' (142). In Swift's Lilliput, state offices are awarded on the basis of candidate's dancing abilities on the tightrope:

When a great office is vacant, either by death or disgrace (which often happens), five or six of those candidates petition the emperor to entertain his majesty and the court with a dance on the rope; and whoever jumps the highest, without falling, succeeds in the office. Very often the chief ministers themselves are commanded to show their skill, and to convince the emperor that they have not lost their faculty. (Swift n.p.)

When Cid arrives in Maya, he witnesses the 'danza de los uagangas' (49).<sup>18</sup> This, and the comparatively benign judicial system of Maya, is replaced by gladiatorial fights to the death with wild beasts. These not only provide a means of selection or of winning a pardon, but also create vacancies for the opportunistic and thus encourage naked ambition, all in the context of a chapter claiming to describe the 'Supresión de los sacrificios humanos' (231–48). They also entertain. In doing so, they recall Philip Armstrong's description of a 'Swiftian chiasmus: the portrayal of people so brutal, and animals so hominoid, that the hierarchical opposition between "man and beast" disintegrates as it is reversed' (Armstrong 77). As a result of the changes that he has introduced to Maya, Cid confidently asserts that 'Las artes, el espíritu de sociabilidad, el entusiasmo caballeresco, adelantaron mucho' (248) and that 'á las generaciones venideras correspondía perfeccionar nuestra obra' (236). The text thus overturns readers' understandings of progress and civilization, and Cid quite literally acknowledges that civilization is built on false appearances when he describes lying as 'la noble mentira (sin la cual muchos adelantos religiosos, políticos y sociales serían imposibles)' (71). The Mayas, he says, do not know how to lie (71).

Like *Gulliver's Travels*, *La conquista* is a first-person account of a visit to an imaginary country. 'As *terra incognita* disappeared from European maps', Richard Phillips tells us in his study of adventure novels, 'writers of adventure stories retreated from realistic to fantastic, purely imaginary spaces' (Phillips 7). Fictional adventure stories could be based on travel narratives precisely because the descriptions of real journeys were themselves so like adventure stories already. Several critics have commented on the ways *La conquista* echoes the work of the explorer Henry Stanley, infamous for his activities in the Belgian Congo (Fernández Sánchez-Alarcos 114; Martín-Márquez 85; Agudiez).<sup>19</sup> The ways in which *La conquista* follows the generic conventions of the nineteenth-century colonial travel narrative are clear from the start: it is a first-person narrative; '[c]hapters are headed with telegraphic summaries of their content, just as in Stanley's works' (Martín-Márquez 89); the narrator, Pío Cid, tells readers about his own life and his reasons for wanting to travel; the setting is an exotic location; the narrator outlines how he has improved the society he encounters; he includes geographical information and anthropological commentary; and finally, he completes his adventures by returning to his homeland. Ganivet's biographical circumstances, and his letters to friends,

<sup>18</sup> Flores's *Mañana* also references this episode of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. See vol. 6, pp. 93–7.

<sup>19</sup> Osborne details some of the specific ways in which Ganivet drew on Stanley's writing to create the fictional kingdom of Maya. Curiously, Osborne discusses this in terms of Ganivet's 'indebtedness' (Osborne 31), rather than drawing forth the satirical and parodic opportunities offered by imitation or mimicry.

provide evidence of his familiarity with contemporary conquests, such as the Belgian conquest of the Congo, and with the travel and adventure narratives that these produced (see, for example, González Alcantud). He unequivocally condemned the disjuncture between the civilizing claims of the colonizers and the reality of exploitation and commerce (Fernández Sánchez-Alarcos 2000, 28–9). Fernández Sánchez-Alarcos, in his preface to a recent edition of *La conquista*, notes the demand throughout Europe for accounts of genuine journeys and reminds us (as do Schmidt-Nowara, Surwillo and Torres-Pau), that Spain was not exempt from colonialist expansionist ambitions, but participated in the European fervour for displays of exoticism with all the power dynamics attendant on the exhibition of human beings as items of interest. The hostile reaction of some readers, he argues, can be linked to the incorporation of conventional elements of nineteenth-century colonialist travel narratives. Thus, while Swift and Butler satirized their contemporaries by contrasting them with ‘un término extraño e inverosímil’, Ganivet contrasts the object of his satire with ‘un término extraño [...] pero verosímil’ (Fernández Sánchez-Alarcos 2000, 21). The appeal of civilization is questioned, not in relation to an imaginary and unreal world, but in relation to something real and definite that was put on display in nineteenth-century travel narratives and in ‘esas exhibiciones de aborígenes extraídos de su medio’ (Fernández Sánchez-Alarcos 2000, 21). In this view, Ganivet’s contemporaries would have objected to the way a satire of the values of Western civilization was hidden within a realistic description of travel adventures, and the feeling of being tricked that this might produce (Fernández Sánchez-Alarcos 2000, 20).

Martin-Márquez discusses how these imitations interact with a broader interrogation of Spain and Spanishness at the end of the nineteenth century. She notes in particular the points of comparison between *La conquista* and works by the Basque explorer Iradier, author of travel narratives detailing visits to Africa. Her argument is that the inclusion of specific elements drawn from Iradier’s work ‘call[s] into question mytho-scientific notions of a “natural” link between Spaniards and Africans, an essential component of the Hispanotropicalist rhetoric that would serve to justify Spanish colonization in Africa’ (Martin-Márquez 92). *La conquista* is thus directed as much at Spanish colonialism as at Belgian, British or French activities in Africa. The critique she identifies goes beyond strictly humanitarian concerns and reaches deep into Spanish history. Reading about enslavement of the Accas in the kingdom of Maya, she points out:

it is impossible not to recall the passionate debates, instigated by Bartolomé de las Casas, concerning the nefarious consequences of the enslavement of the indigenous population in the Americas—and the ‘humanistic’ solution offered (much to his later regret) by Las Casas [...]: the enslavement of Africans. Cid’s initial treatment of the Accas thus mirrors Spain’s institutionalization of the African slave trade. (Martin-Márquez 94)

Whether Spanish, Belgian or French, these complex justifications of imperialism are built on the scaffolding of a hierarchical relationship between conqueror and conquered. By reaching into history, Ganivet draws attention to the temporal nature of this scaffolding.

In *Time and the Other*, Johannes Fabian outlines a temporal model that he claims informed the discipline of anthropology as it emerged from nineteenth-century intellectual traditions and disciplines. According to this way of thinking, it was possible to witness first hand the different stages of human development by travelling to areas of the globe where human society was less advanced. These areas remained outside of history, temporally immobile, while the ethnographer or anthropologist was able to engage in a form of time travel. Fabian calls this difference between the dynamic time of the observing ethnographer and the static

time attributed to the indigenous subjects 'allochroism'. In the separate context of Scottish literature, Cairns Craig outlines what the logic of civilization and linear time suggested was supposed to happen when 'static' societies were jump-started on the path into history. Priorism is the assumption that 'all places will, in time, become like the first place, and that there is nowhere, therefore, to which the experience and the values of the "first place" are not relevant' (Craig 166). This understanding of History was designed for a Western society where development is 'the principal human activity'. History thus 'divides the world into those who are "ahead" [...] and those who simply have events imposed on them' (Craig 209). Both allochroism and priorism provide useful conceptual tools for reading *La conquista*.

Like Fabian's ethnographers, Cid claims to be the only one who can correctly interpret history. He reconstructs the history of the kingdom of Maya by Cid on the basis of a collection of manuscripts. In Cid's analysis, the introduction of writing dates to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries and is due to the influence of European culture on a Maya traveller: 'se deduce que la escritura fue introducida en Maya por un indígena llamado Lopo, que había vivido largos años fuera del país en otras tierras donde habitan hombres caídos del cielo' (75–6). Cid's deductions establish a close correlation with familiar accounts of the Spanish discovery and conquest of the Americas and the purported introduction of writing to Maya coincides with 'los reinados de nuestros Felipes II y III' (76). His claim that writing was first introduced to Maya by Lopo after time spent in Europe, and by implication that no form of indigenous writing predated this is also significant, all the more so given that the name of the imaginary African country so closely resembles that of the Mesoamerican Mayan civilization.<sup>20</sup> Tellingly, Cid calls the modern period, the period after Lopo's interventions, 'la parte movable ó histórica' (77), thus consigning everything before this to prehistory; time moves only after the importation of elements of Western civilization. Before this development, it was static and other. As Maya society has still only travelled part of the path towards civilization, only Cid is able to interpret the real meaning of the documents: 'cabe hacer una ligera exégesis que nos aclare su sentido y nos oriente en cuanto a su verdadero valor' (80). Cid confidently states that Lopo must have encountered Portuguese sailors, travelled with them to Europe and used what he saw there to fabricate 'una religión acomodada á las necesidades de su patria' (81). Lopo used an older belief system 'para establecer sobre ella el castillo de naipes de sus fábulas' (80). This, according to Cid, is the only explanation for some of the stories he finds in the documents: 'No es posible que un pueblo tan atrasado en Arquitectura y en Física haya siquiera concebido la idea de construir una pirámide y de lanzar al espacio un hombre globo' (80). After Lopo's death, the kingdom of Maya was ruled by 'un verdadero hombre de Estado, Usana, el legendario rey Sol' (93). Here, Cid perversely uses Usana's ability to rule the kingdom without the intervention of Europeans as a justification for conquest and colonization:

Ante estos elementos extraños [Europeans and Arabs], que pretendían meter por fuerza la felicidad en los países de África, sólo el reino de Maya supo defenderse y resistir, porque sólo él tuvo á su cabeza un verdadero hombre de Estado, Usana, el legendario rey Sol. Mas no se crea que me coloco parcialmente del lado de la raza indígena, como pudiera desprenderse de mis palabras [...]. Amante de la humanidad, me ha

<sup>20</sup> In the introduction to a collection of interpretations and approaches to the Maya writing of Mesoamerica, Stephen Houston, Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos and David Stuart describe this as 'arguably the most complex form of writing ever devised in antiquity' (Houston, Chinchilla Mazariegos and Stuart, 3). In 1958, YV. Knorozov wrote that 'Up to the present time, some specialists have held to the view that on the American continent before the European colonization there was no writing in the true sense of that word.' This is a view that he sets out to debunk (Knorozov 284).

regocijado siempre la idea de que esos descubrimientos de nuevas tierras y de nuevos hombres no son inútiles, puesto que llevan consigo, por el carácter humanitario de nuestra especie, el deseo de mejorar á nuestros hermanos, de colonizar los países que ellos ocupan, civilizándolos con mayor ó menor suavidad, según el temperamento de la nación colonizadora. (93)

Readers are confronted with the patently flawed argument that even those non-European societies that are capable of self-government according to European principles are still in need of civilizing, and that this process of civilizing involves forceful imposition ('meter por fuerza la felicidad', 'civilizándolos con mayor o menor suavidad'). For Cid, Usana's native abilities are the exception that proves the rule. After Usana's death, therefore, Maya reverts to stasis: 'Ninguna reforma importante se había hecho después de él' (96). Cid frames his own role as that of successor to Lopo and Usana. Thus, an initial impetus that was the direct result of European influence created momentum for an indigenous king to institute change which was only resumed when Cid instigated his reforms and set the kingdom firmly on the path that all civilizations must follow, 'la vía de la civilización' (217); 'el camino de la verdadera civilización' (265). However, this creative interpretation of the evidence is simply proof of Cid's ability to replicate the rhetoric of civilization and empire to justify his inhumane and self-interested behaviour. Furthermore, by making Cid's duplicity obvious, *La conquista* discredits historical documents such as Bernal Díaz's *Conquista de la Nueva España* (Britt Arredondo 122), ultimately suggesting that it is the rhetoric of civilization and empire itself that is flawed, not merely Cid's opportunism.

When Cid prepares to introduce alcohol, he reiterates his self-appointed role as successor to a line of reformers: 'la obra esbozada por Lopo, planteada por Usana y perfeccionada por mí' (274). In fact, the entire project is a tax-raising exercise that will give Cid access to yet more wealth. Cid invokes discourses of racial difference, degeneracy theories, as well as the nascent discipline of sociology. He speculates that while the consumption of alcohol by 'la raza blanca' leads to degeneracy, this might not be case for 'la raza negra' (275): 'si el alcohol engendra el idiotismo en los seres civilizados, vendría a producir el desarrollo intelectual en estas razas primitivas, que ya poseen el idiotismo por naturaleza' (275). And even if his theories of race are debunked, demonstrating that the Mayas do not suffer from idiotism, alcohol can still be considered an advance because 'la prosperidad de las naciones dependía [...] del embrutecimiento de sus individuos merced á varios abusos, y entre ellos el abuso del alcohol' (275). In other words, if the Mayas were not degenerate specimens of humanity before Cid's arrival, they must be made so, as this is what civilization requires. Ganivet, wittingly or not, echoes Engels: 'The consumption of alcohol was one of Engel's benchmarks for the increasing exploitation of laborers, the breakdown of communal life and the demoralization of the working class' (Barros and Room 3).

Just as Flores used the symbolism of light to upset narratives of progress and degeneration, and to cast doubt upon historiographical certainties, Ganivet's novel uses lighting to undermine the claims of progress. Before Cid's arrival, homes in Maya were lit by torches that produced 'humo asfixiante y [...] tizne pegajosa' (250). According to Cid's worldview, lighting can be taken as a measure of how far a country has advanced on the path of civilization. There are set stages in this process, and overcoming resistance to each one represents a victory over nature (249). Cid establishes a link between individuality, liberty and light, and draws, just as Flores did, on established tropes: '¡Con cuánta razón se ha dicho siempre que la luz es el fundamento de la libertad!' (252). In Maya, Cid introduces street lighting. This becomes a lucrative state monopoly, with Cid as the main beneficiary. Nevertheless, he represents his achievements as epic, the result of 'un ciclo entero de combates heroicos' and 'una victoria



que reputaré siempre como la más grande de todas' (249). In practice, however, Cid's changes lead to alcoholization, prostitution and adultery.

The introduction of street lighting and alcohol to Maya are both examples of how, in *La conquista*, linear, forward-moving time that underpins the doctrine of progress is disrupted, diverted, turned back on itself and inside out. As Jean Franco states, 'Again and again, Pío Cid's appeals to the law of history or to the doctrine of progress are shown to be either in conflict with reality or likely to lead to unforeseen consequences' (Franco 36). Nevertheless, that is not to say that they endorse nostalgia or traditionalism, as these would also require a credible historiographical base. As with Flores's *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, the issue is not whether *La conquista* advocates for progress or for a return to some putative past; it is more a question of how the novel discredits all projects that depend upon confident claims to knowledge of the past.

This article has examined three nineteenth-century Spanish texts by authors who are rarely considered together. I have attempted to demonstrate that they all make extensive use of metafictional or self-reflexive literary techniques, and that these techniques are firmly embedded in contemporary literary practices and conventions. However, given the close association between twentieth-century postmodernism and metafiction, to stop at demonstrating that these texts are self-reflexive would only reify the idea that they are interesting because and only because we can read them as precursors. This article has tried to draw out some of the contradictions or paradoxes that the texts generate. Far from evidencing incompetence or naivety, these contradictions are key textual strategies. From all of this, the future emerges, not as a point towards which time was moving, but as a mechanism for interrupting and entangling the lines of time. Thus, by making use of the inherently contradictory nature of the literature of types, *Ayer, hoy y mañana* simultaneously announces and disavows the idea of distinct historical periods. Flores furthermore expresses profound scepticism about the possibility of historical knowledge, without which the advances of progress and civilization cannot be measured, and without which it is impossible to gauge change. In *Historia de un pueblo*, Amorós projects his writing onto a heteronym, Silverio Lanza, a nobody whose words reach us from a nowhere and a nowhen through a series of texts so generically diverse they confound all attempts at classification. Throughout, the works that comprise *Historia de un pueblo* seem to offer detail about the characters, places and society of Atargea, only for these details to become blurred as soon as they are scrutinized. Thus, the eponymous biographee of *Noticias biográficas acerca del Excmo. Sr. Marqués del Mantillo* disappears as soon as Lanza attempts to expand on his life, like a poor-quality digital image expanded beyond its capacity. Ganivet's *La conquista* is the most frontal of the attacks on the narratives of civilization; it renders these plotted trajectories absurd, logically incoherent, irrational, self-serving and opportunistic. Far from confirming the idea that the nineteenth century was an era of belief in progress, or even a period when authors made a choice between looking forwards or backwards in time, the texts dismantle the temporal frameworks upon which the idea of progress depends. This is as true for the mid-century *costumbrista* author, Flores, as it is for Amorós and Ganivet, and thus poses a challenge to literary histories that rely on the notion of turn-of-the-century rupture. *Ayer, hoy y mañana*, *Historia de un pueblo* and *La conquista* escape the strictures of linear time; but perhaps they can also open the way for non-teleological explorations of shared concerns and techniques across works of literature.

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